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Living Together

JACQUES DERRIDA'S COMMUNITIES OF VIOLENCE AND PEACE

Edited by ELISABETH WEBER

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Living together begins with grace.

Jacques Derrida affirms that living together begins with grace by beginning his essay "Avowing—The Impossible" with "*grâce*." As he writes, "first word, *grâce*, second word, *grâce* . . . in order to avow while asking for *grâce*"—asking for, desiring, calling or even begging for "*grâce*," and doing so "before even starting [*avant même de commencer*]" ("Avowing," 18).¹ His text opens with an avowal of these two words of "*grâce*" and the risk that this invocation or provocation entails.

Before the beginning, then, there is risk, which includes the possibility that this pre-preliminary petition for "*grâce*" might go without response or might not receive the "*grâce*" requested. Any act of address involves this risk, since address always involves self-exposure and self-sending, even self-dissemination, with no promise of return. Address remains a particularly risky endeavor in this case of "*grâce*," which performs in multiple registers at once. One might even, or therefore, say that "*grâce*" overperforms, that its performance overflows and surpasses any regular or regulatory conception of performativity, for this invocatory "*grâce*" opens and affirms, avows and requests, gives and saves, blesses and welcomes—all at once, even before the beginning.

By commencing with "*grâce*, *oui*, *grâce*," followed by "*oui*," Derrida's text opens with "*grâce*, *oui*" twice, so that "*oui*" is the second word, twice following and affirming "*grâce*" in a quasi repetition. "*Oui*" appears twice, before the beginning, as what Derrida calls "the opening and the cut [*l'ouverture et la coupure*]" that "institutes and opens . . . exceeds and incises" his text as well as the possibility of performativity.² "*Oui*" does so, according to Derrida, as a preontological and "transcendental [or quasi-transcendental] condition of all performative dimensions," which means that "any event brought about by a performative mark, any writing in the widest sense of the word, involves a *yes*, whether this is phenomenalized or not, that is, verbalized or adverbialized as

such.³ Hence “oui” is implicated in any performative scene, such as address, as what engenders the possibility of performativity.

Though “oui” is never present “as such,” this arche-originary, quasi-transcendental nevertheless, Derrida writes, “opens the eventness of every event [*ouvrir l'événementialité de tout événement*],” though “it is not itself an event.”⁴ An event names that which comes very quickly and always unexpectedly, which is why Derrida suggests that “an event implies surprise, exposure, the unanticipatable” and is “by definition an absolute exception, even grace maybe [*peut-être la grâce*].”⁵ An event arrives unforeseeably, as an eruption of the impossible in the possible. An event is, in short, when the impossible happens. “Oui” opens the way for this impossible eruption, as the condition of the unconditional, but as second: “oui” is not the first but the second word, twice, in Derrida’s doubled invocation “*grâce, oui*.” Though “oui” conditions performativity from before the beginning, before language and even before being, “oui” only ever appears second—and twice, since according to Derrida “oui” “begins by responding,” by addressing an other and asking this other to say “oui” in response—asking, that is, “only for another yes, the yes of an other,” thanks to which “oui” becomes “oui . . . oui.”⁶

Derrida deploys this “oui . . . oui” at the beginning of his text, punctuating it with “*grâce . . . grâce*,” so that “*grâce*” and “oui” call and respond to each other, twice. “*Grâce*” and “oui” responsively avow and affirm each other, twice, at and as the incisive opening of Derrida’s text. This points already to “*grâce*” as avowal and request: “*grâce*” avows “oui” as well as itself in its affirming, responsive, double re-call, and in doing so, avows the possibility of testimony. “*Grâce*” becomes itself testimony, for Derrida risks two words of “*grâce*” (and two affirmations of “oui”) “in order to attest to my gratitude, indeed, but also in order to avow while asking for [*demandant*] *grâce*” (“Avowing,” 18; “Avouer,” 181). His calls and re-calls for “*grâce*” at once avow and request “*grâce*,” addressing an other and asking this other to avow, to say “oui” to “*grâce*.” In responsively avowing “*grâce*,” this other would render “*grâce*” performatively as Derrida does when he writes, “I would like to render *grâce*, therefore, and also to ask for your *grâce* [*grâce, donc, je voudrais rendre, et grâce demander*]” (“Avowing,” 18, translation slightly modified; “Avouer,” 181). He renders “*grâce*” as thanks and requests “*grâce*” as pardon: pardon from any other whom his text addresses.

His rendering-request solicits pardon on behalf of or in the place of his text—and does so in advance, for (in his words) “what I will soon avow” (“Avowing,” 18; “Avouer,” 181). He begs for pardon ahead of time, asking an other whom his text addresses for an anachronistic decision and gift of forgiveness. In doing so, he asks this other to do the impossible. To decide (especially beforehand) can never be an active matter of self-mastery but is instead a passive experience of alterity that one undergoes and through which a decision of an other arrives. This is why, for Derrida, “my decision can never be mine; it is always the other’s decision in me,” and this decision “should tear . . . should disrupt the fabric of the possible.”⁷ Any decision thus remains impossible, but a decision to performatively grant pardon, as in “I forgive” addressed to an other, is doubly impossible since, as

Derrida succinctly states, "forgiving is impossible [*le pardon est impossible*]."⁸ Pardon would become possible only as impossible: only in forgiving the unforgivable. Pardon, if it takes place, takes place extraordinarily, as an absolute and unforeseeable exception that arrives, according to Derrida, "as the coming of the impossible, where a 'perhaps [*peut-être*]' deprives us of all assurance and leaves the future to the future [*laisse l'avenir à l'avenir*]."⁹ This "perhaps [*peut-être*]," allied to "oui," reiterates that the impossible remains unpredictable and that the coming of the impossible, as an event, *might* or *might not* happen, remaining "perhaps" to come (*à-venir*) in the unforeseeable future (*l'avenir*). Pardon would thus be one name (or nickname) of the impossible, because for forgiveness to happen, the impossible would have to become possible, as an event. The same would hold for avowal; Derrida affirms in writing that "an avowal, if there is such, must avow the unavowable . . . and therefore do the impossible [*l'aveu, s'il y en a, doit avouer l'inavouable . . . et donc faire l'impossible*]" ("Avowing," 19; "Avouer," 182).¹⁰

Giving (already implied in forgiving) would be another instance of doing the impossible, since a gift must come by surprise, from an other, not as part of an economic exchange and not with any expectation or even hope of return. A gift must never present itself as such, making it what Derrida calls "the very figure of the impossible," yet he insists that "the impossible must be done. The event, if there is one, consists in doing the impossible [*il faut faire l'impossible. L'événement, s'il y en a, consiste à faire l'impossible*]."¹¹ Though the gift figures the impossible, one must nevertheless give—and give in the face of its very impossibility, beyond calculation or condition.

Derrida gives "grâce" in a polyperformative rendering-request that renders "grâce" as a gift of thanks and requests "grâce" as a gift of pardon, indulgence, even mercy. He requests "grâce" as a gift that saves, for an offering of mercy offers clemency that protects and keeps safe. Such saving "grâce" arrives idiomatically, by way of "grâce à," or "thanks to": saving thanks to "grâce," which gives safety "grâce à" or via *sauf* (save, safe, unscathed). An eventful donation of "grâce" might, in a Christian idiom, include the gift of salvation, which in this context represents the gift that exceeds all other gifts since it grants ultimate safety as well as eternal life. Thus, "grâce" can give a life-saving gift, as it does in an Abrahamic idiom, particularly one definitively marked by the *Akedah*. In this scene of near-sacrifice, "grâce" names a double gift that saves twice, saving Isaac's life and saving Abraham from killing his son. The angelic double call to Abraham on Mount Moriah gives (however impossibly) "grâce" as a gift of *sauf*, which keeps Isaac unscathed and his life safe.¹²

In view of this Abrahamic event of "grâce," it is not surprising that *sauf* refers more broadly to religion. Indeed, Derrida links *sauf* to the two sources of religion, which he identifies as sacrality and faith. By giving safety, *sauf* keeps someone or something safe and sound by marking it as set apart, distinct, special, extraordinary—in other words, sacred. In addition, Derrida asserts, "the word 'sauf' leads back to the origin of faith and religion itself."¹³ Hence religion bears two genealogies, two sources, and two names: *sauf* and *foi*.

These two source names come together in the gift of testimony, which, according to Derrida, reveals “a convergence of *these* two sources: the *unscathed* (the safe, the sacred or the saintly) and the *fiduciary* (trustworthiness, fidelity, credit, belief or faith).”¹⁴ This confluence takes place in any experience of testimony as well as any scene of performativity, any address, any attestation or avowal, such as Derrida’s invocatory avowal-affirmation, “*grâce, oui, grâce*,” which, as a performative (in this case, a polypertormative), pledges faith and asks an other for a pledge of faith. This pledge calls for incredible faith, of the sort required by a miracle, for in this performative scene, Derrida asks an other “to believe the other that I am” and “to believe what I say as one believes in a miracle.”¹⁵ A miracle is, after all, an event par excellence; a miracle is one name for the impossible becoming possible and a call to believe in the unbelievable. Only belief in a miracle, then, would be belief; as Derrida writes, “To believe should then lie and reside only in this impossible faith in the impossible. Then one could believe only in miracles [*Alors on ne pourrait croire qu’au miracle*]. And to believe *would be* the miracle, the magical power of the miracle. The miracle would be the ordinary of belief.”¹⁶ As a name, faith would remain *sauf*, in reserve, saving itself only to refer to miracles. The name “faith” would, in this way, become sacred.

Faith, like “*grâce*,” would become a benediction, a *benedictum*, a *bien dire*, that grants “*grâce*” as blessing, since to bless extends a gift marked by *sauf* and “*grâce*.” Derrida’s “*grâce, oui, grâce*” thus opens his text with a blessing, an offering of benediction in the form of a prayer, which (like any address) depends upon a pledge of faith. His text begins with a benediction that blesses and welcomes its addressee, no matter whom. The double “*grâce, oui*” affirms Derrida’s avowal: “Let us say *yes to who or what arrives*, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any *identification*, whether it be or not be a question of a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest or an unexpected visitor, whether the arrival be or not be the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine being, living or dead, male or female [*disons, oui, à l’arrivant, avant toute détermination, avant toute anticipation, avant toute identification, qu’il s’agisse ou non d’un étranger, d’un immigré, d’un invité ou d’un visiteur inopiné, que l’arrivant soit ou non le citoyen d’un autre pays, un être humain, animal, ou divin, un vivant ou un mort, masculin ou féminin*].”¹⁷ This Derrida does in offering, “before even starting,” an affirming gift and welcoming avowal of “*grâce, oui, grâce*,” to whomever his text addresses. Derrida thus does the impossible by granting hospitality to one or ones who, like an event, arrive unforeseeably and without warning—and, like an event, whose arrival calls for a response, in this case a giving and forgiving under the sign of “welcome.”

“*Grâce, oui, grâce*” announces and enacts this welcome as an offering of hospitality, which is a performance that avows, or an avowal that performs, the impossible. Hospitality enmeshes and intermingles all of these calls and responses, by way of “*grâce*,” to do the impossible in the face of the impossible: to open, to affirm, to avow, to give, to save, to bless, to respond, to take responsibility, to welcome . . . the list is necessarily endless and

incalculable. In giving the gift of hospitality, then, one impossibly recalls and responds to all of these performative invocations and provocations in “*grâce, oui, grâce*.”

Living together takes place by grace.

“Living together [*vivre ensemble*]” depends on the hospitality extended in the name of “*grâce*”—a hospitality exceeding any conditions that might be inscribed in a pact, a law, or a right. Hospitality, as an event of “*grâce*,” must remain unconditional; it must entail a willingness to exceed bounds, to cross thresholds, and to welcome an *arrivant*; no matter whom or what. Such absolute hospitality requires, Derrida writes, “that I give . . . to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I give *place* to him, that I let him come, that I let him arrive, and take place in the place I offer him, without asking of him either reciprocity (entry into a pact) or even his name [*que je donne . . . à l’autre absolu, inconnu, anonyme, et que je lui donne lieu, que je le laisse venir, que je le laisse arriver, et avoir lieu dans le lieu que je lui offre, sans lui demander ni réciprocité (l’entrée dans un pacte) ni même son nom*].”¹⁸ Absolute hospitality calls for this response that transgresses limits to make room for an *arrivant* who, like the impossible, happens to arrive. Hospitality would performatively begin with an instantaneous affirmation, “*oui*,” and a welcoming word of “*grâce*,” however (and especially when) impossible, for hospitality means, according to Derrida, “to let oneself be overtaken [*surprendre*]” by anyone who shows up, thereby partaking of what Derrida calls “the madness of hospitality” (madness naming a different kind of transgressing limits).¹⁹

Any *arrivant* calls for this same excessive hospitality; this welcoming avowal and affirmation (“*grâce, oui, grâce*”) granted to any other who arrives. One must, then, follow the example of Abraham and offer the same unrestrained and unreasonable welcome to any other who unexpectedly comes, whether human or divine (or something else), known or unknown. Abraham welcomes any *arrivant*, no matter whom or what, avowing in his acts Derrida’s contention that “every other (one) is every (bit) other [*tout autre est tout autre*],” which implies that any other is as other as God (the name of the wholly other) would be and therefore that “God, as wholly other, is to be found everywhere there is something of the wholly other,” so that “what can be said about the relation of Abraham to God can be said of my relation without relation to every other (one) as every (bit) other [*tout autre comme tout autre*].”²⁰ Hence, any gift of hospitality is marked by the Abrahamic and the mode of radical hospitality that it entails.

Nevertheless, any gift of hospitality remains just that: a gift—which is to say, impossible, yet taking place singularly. Hospitality of this kind can never be acculturated, routinized to the point of expectation, for this would deny its eventful character. Hospitality must remain impossible, called for by an unexpected and unexpected *arrivant* who catches one off guard, unprepared or unavailable. With each call of hospitality and affirmative response to this call, both each time unique, the impossible takes place without condition or reservation—or regularization. Granting hospitality (particularly to the unwelcomeable) must, like avowing the unavowable or pardoning the unpardonable, remain

(perhaps thanks to *sauf*) an instance of doing the impossible as an avowing and affirming response to a disruptive, unanticipatable event—and, Derrida avers, “one must do the impossible [*il faut faire l'impossible*].”²¹

This would be the impossible possibility, the chance and the risk, of “living together [*vivre ensemble*].” In other words, “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” requires doing the impossible—more than once.

But to do the impossible remains and must remain impossible. It can take place only as impossible, arriving as an event that one avows and affirms, particularly since one can avow only the unavowable. “Living together [*vivre ensemble*]” would thus stand as another name for the event—if there is such [*s'il y en a*]. This relational nexus of “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” and the event figures the hinge of Derrida’s text, which he affirms in writing: “It is of this relation between the event and the ‘living together [*vivre ensemble*]’ that I would like to speak,” namely, “on what can ‘occur [*arriver*]’ with respect to the ‘living together [*vivre ensemble*],’ on what can occur to the ‘living together [*vivre ensemble*]’ and on a certain relation of the arrival, the coming or the event, to the ‘living together [*vivre ensemble*]’” (“Avowing,” 22; “Avouer,” 187).²² (To speak about this relation would involve addressing “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” as if it were possible, as if all of its preconditions were possible, as if one could do the impossible. Speaking about this relation would proceed by way of this as if, which might be one reason that Derrida enframes “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” with quotation marks throughout his text.)

Whatever can “occur [*arriver*]” via “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” occurs through life. “Living together [*vivre ensemble*]” is an event of life; even better, “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” is a matter (and manner) of living. This makes it a matter of “grâce,” for on Derrida’s account, “grace grants life for life [*la grâce accorde la vie pour la vie*].”²³ “Grâce”—“grâce, oui, grâce”—performatively opens and affirms, avows and requests, gives and saves, blesses and welcomes life, and life traces its genealogy to “grâce.” Life begins with “grâce” and begins again with “oui,” which affirms life in affirming “grâce” before the beginning, “Grâce, oui, grâce” avows and affirms life in advance, ahead of time.

Hence life takes place already (“before even starting”) in “grâce”—“yes, life [*oui, la vie*],” Derrida writes, “from the first syllable. The first syllable is literally alive [*en vie*],” and “life is kept alive [*en vie*], beginning again from one word, one syllable to the next.”²⁴ Derrida goes on, citing Hélène Cixous’s “*je vis des lettres*” (whose translations might include “I live letters” or “I live on letters”) to reiterate that every word, every syllable and letter, performs a “oui” that reaffirms life, that repeats the gift of life and, in doing so, keeps life alive.²⁵ Language revives life with every syllable, every letter, so that life lives on (though it remains untranslatable). This reviving gift, moreover, is already given and given again, twice, in the double “grâce, oui” that commences Derrida’s text even before commencing. “Grâce” gives life so that life might live and live on, so (in Derrida’s words) “that life should live, oh, that the living of life . . . in all times and tenses *might* live, that life may live for life [*que vive la vie, vivement que puisse vivre le vivre de la vie . . . sous tous*

les temps, que vive la vie pour la vie].”²⁶ Given that “grace grants life for life” so “that life may live for life,” one might risk avowing and affirming that “grace” is for life; *grâce, c’est pour la vie*.

What *for*? What is the force or might of this *for* (*pour*)? It conditions the meaning of life, so that life would remain unthinkable before and without *for*. Life, in the phrase “it is *for* life [*c’est pour la vie*],” must be approached and thought by way of *for*, rather than the reverse. As Derrida writes, “The world ‘life [*vie*],’ would not be thinkable in its meaning . . . before what, grammatically, gives itself as a preposition, namely, ‘for [*pour*].’”²⁷ In giving itself, *for* also grants the way through which “grace” grants life, which means that life must pass by way of *for*—and not only life, but anything, since *for* makes way for everything that might pass into existence.

This *for* owes to its genealogy, tracing its lineage to *pro*, a Latin preposition that can mean “for,” “before,” “in front” or “in place of,” “by virtue of.” These potential meanings give *for* transitive as well as matrixial, even originary, features (thereby granting *for* a kinship with *À* and *khôra*, which engender place). According to Derrida, “this ‘for,’ this *pro* would become the prolegomenon of everything, it would be said [or would say itself] before any *logos*, it goes in all directions, that of finality or of destination, of gift, of donation and of dativity, but also of substitution and of replacement. . . . Absolutely preliminary, the *pro* of *for* thus pronames and prenames everything [*ce ‘pour’; ce pro- deviendrait le prologomène de tout, il se dirait avant tout logos, il va dans toutes les directions, celle de la finalité ou de la destination, du don, de la donation et de la dativité, mais aussi de la substitution et du remplacement. . . . Préalable absolu, le pro de pour pronomme ainsi et prénomme tout*].”²⁸ *For*, then, also relates to “oui” as what comes before and makes possible any performativity, any language, any naming, any being. Like “oui,” *for* arrives before the beginning, preceding and proceeding from everything by pronaming and prenamings everything. *For* performs the act of giving names in advance, ahead of time. As Derrida asserts, “Everything happens on the side of ‘for’ [*tout se passe du côté de ‘pour’*].”²⁹

Like “oui,” *for* also operates in every performative scene, as the threshold through which every possibility of performativity passes in its teleological transitivity, crossing from one to another: from addresser to addressee, from giver to receiver, and so on. *For* designates a passage through which performativity moves, conditioning any possibility of taking place and of taking the place of any emplacement or replacement. Derrida’s avowed hypothesis thus becomes what this passage, in all of its excessive surplus, passes in the “life” of “for life” by way of *for*, thus reiterating that “‘for’ conditions the meaning [*sens*] of ‘life.’”³⁰ If “grace grants life for life” before the beginning, and *for* stands as “the prolegomenon of everything,” then *for* comes even before “before the beginning”; it precedes, makes way for, and gives birth to life, so that *for* is always (already) *for* life.

To be *for* life means, among other things, to side with life, to take and to stand on the side of life. Taking sides in this way would seem to require plurality in the possibility of taking one of two or more sides, but such is not the case with life. Life is a singular side

without an other. Life, Derrida repeatedly insists, “has no other, it has no other side” which means that “there is no other side than this side, the side of life [*il n’y a pas d’autre côté que ce côté-ci, le côté de la vie*]” and, therefore, that “there is no side for nonlife.”³¹ Life is the only side. It remains, Derrida continues, “a unique side without another side, and this would be life itself . . . this unique side, this unilaterality is *of life for life*, life itself, life promised to life [*de la vie pour la vie, la vie même, la vie promise à la vie*].”³² There is only the side of life *for life*.

Death, therefore, is no side and has no side. Death is a nonside. But this does not amount to a denial of death—far from it. It amounts instead to a confounding of traditional oppositions that set life and death as binary poles, on opposite sides, symmetrically siding against each other. Often in such a configuration, death becomes life’s negative, defined by a lack of life: Life is something, and death is nothing, nothing but a lack. Phrased in ontological terms, life is being, and death is nonbeing. Derrida’s suggestion displaces this kind of binary, oppositional structure based on plenitude and lack, with each taking a side. If life remains a side without an other, if life is the only side, then death (as a nonside) must be on the side of life. Life and death, then, are on the same side, so that even death must in this way be *for life*. Furthermore, if life and death stand on the same side, they become no longer opposed or even opposable but undecidable—and, Derrida avers, “Because it is undecidable, one can decide and settle only *for life*.”³³

If life and death remain undecidable, so do finitude and infinitude. They, too, must both reside on the side of life as the only side. Thus, Derrida writes, “Life, which is undecidable, is also, in its very finitude, infinite. What has only one side—a single edge without an opposite edge—is in-finite [*in-fini*]. Finite because it has an edge on one side, but infinite because it has no opposable edge.”³⁴ *For* life, then, is bounded and boundless, limited and unlimited, as in-finite, with the infinite impossibly within the finite. The finite and the infinite are on the same side, just as the possible and the impossible are, with the latter conditioning and making way *for* the former. Like the possible and the impossible, the finite and the infinite are not opposed but dwell on one side (*côté*), next to (*à côté de*) each other. But their cohabitation on the side *for* life does not efface death and mortality in a wish for immortality or eternal life. Instead, it shifts the possibilities of immortality or eternity so that, in Derrida’s words, “there is neither immortality nor eternity in the old sense of these words—unless [*sauf si*] the unharmed [*sauf*] being, the spared [*sauvé*] and thus pardoned [*graciée*] life, in its finite moment of life, deserves to be called immortality or eternity, in the grace of the finite instant.”³⁵ Derrida thus redefines immortality and eternity, via the infinite, in terms of *sauf* and “*grâce*,” so that eventually granting these gifts within life gives gifts of life, gifts *for* life.

Every reiteration of “oui” that affirms “*grâce*,” which gives life *for* life, avows and affirms this commitment *for* life, one that is (in Derrida’s words) “a commitment of life to life and unto death, whether it will be life or death [*un engagement de la vie à la vie à la mort, si ce sera la vie ou la mort*].”³⁶ Because they are both *for* life on the side of life, life and

death here remain undecidable, in a space of "life death." Like the possible and the impossible, like the finite and the infinite, life and death fall on the same side and co-implicate each other, so that any experience of one is engendered thanks to the other. Because no *for* life can decide or disentangle life and death, living and dying, living and the living cannot shield themselves from dying and the dead. All of the possibilities of the event and the *ar-ri-vant* entail avowing and affirming whoever or whatever arrives or returns, alive or dead, with unconditional hospitality, since "*tout autre est tout autre*." Consequently, any experience of or possibility of living—and, therefore, of "living together [*vivre ensemble*]"—must include living with others, alive or dead. One can and one must "live together" with the dead, *for* life and on the side of life, as a condition of the possibility of living. Indeed, Derrida attests, "[Living together] [*vivre ensemble*] with the dead, is not an accident, a miracle, or an extraordinary story [*histoire*]. It is rather an essential possibility of existence," particularly since an experience of the impossible engenders any possible experience ("Avowing," 20; "Avouer," 184).

Living and thus "living together [*vivre ensemble*]" with the dead take place on the side of life thanks to *tekhnē*. *Tekhnē* names a practice, a "doing," that brings together performativity and repetition, the unique and the recurring, what arrives and what returns, commencement and recommencement. *Tekhnē* thus reaffirms Derrida's axiomatic avowal, "no to-come without heritage and the possibility of repeating. No to-come without some sort of *iterability* . . . and *confirmation* of the originary *yes*. No to-come without some sort of messianic memory and promise, of a messianicity older than all religion, more originary than all messianism. No discourse or address of the other without the possibility of an elementary promise. . . . No promise, therefore, without the promise of a confirmation of the *yes*."³⁷ *Tekhnē* binds the possibility of the unforeseeable spontaneity of life and the event to the possibility of repetition and automation—the possibility to come (*à-venir*) of an *ar-ri-vant* and the possibility of return in a *revenant*. In doing so, *tekhnē* binds the unscathed and the fiduciary, *sauf* and *foi*, as the two sources of religion.

Tekhnē also binds life and death, the living and the dead, which "live together" on the side of life thanks to a bond between life and *tekhnē*. This bond includes iterability, address, faith, and performativity (along with *oikos* and *oikonomia*) according to a risk and a chance: the risk and chance of life *for* life, which open the risk and chance of "living together [*vivre ensemble*]." *Tekhnē* offers both the possibility and impossibility of "living together [*vivre ensemble*]" via the "*grâce*" of faith, which itself conditions every performative scene of address, every possibility of reiteration, and thus every chance for community as "living together [*vivre ensemble*]," with no matter whom or what. This faith is implied in "*oui*" as affirmation, serving as what Derrida names "the testimonial pledge of every performative" that calls for faith *as if* in a miracle to allow for the possibility of "*oui*" as reaffirmation, reavowal, reiteration.³⁸ Both faith and the future, as the copossibilities of an *ar-ri-vant* and a response, depend on *tekhnē* as itself, according to Derrida, "the possibility, one can also say the chance, of faith. And this chance must include in it the greatest risk

[la possibilité, on peut aussi dire la chance, de la foi. Et cette chance doit inclure en elle le plus grand risque].³⁹

That risk is, for life, death as mortal finitude and, for "living together [*vivre ensemble*]," what Derrida identifies as a "death-drive that is silently at work in every community . . . constituting it as such in its iterability, its heritage, its spectral tradition."⁴⁰ *Tekhnē* bears an affinity with death as the impossible condition of possibility for life and for "living together [*vivre ensemble*]." Though *tekhne* is exemplarily for life, it owes this to its relation with death, for *tekhne* is, according to Derrida, "death in life, as condition of life" ("Avowing," 39; "Avouer," 213). *Tekhnē* haunts life and "living together [*vivre ensemble*]" with the specter of death, which it manifests particularly in technologies of life, technologies for life, that, Derrida writes, "engage the living, all the syntheses of the living, all the dimensions of the living being-together [*l'être-ensemble vivant*] (with oneself or with the other) in the space and the time of a *techno-biological prosthesis*" ("Avowing," 39; "Avouer," 213).⁴¹ This prosthesis inserts a *tekhne*, a technology, into life that performs a denaturing move by interrupting the apparent naturalness of life. Thus *tekhne*, like death, is on the side of life, as the side without an other that interrupts traditional structures of binary opposition. This interruption takes place thanks to an excess that moves, in Derrida's words, "*beyond everything* that is founded on this opposition of nature/culture. That is to say, beyond everything, more or less everything" ("Avowing," 27; "Avouer," 194).⁴² *Tekhnē* enables and performs this excessive interruption by surpassing the nature/culture distinction thanks to its intervention in the very nature of life.

This excessive disruption or disruptive excess extends for life, for the whole of life, since "grace grants life for life."⁴³ Indeed, Derrida writes, "grace gives in every sense, it gives birth but it also pardons sovereignly, it grants life by interrupting dying [*mourance*], it lifts the sentence and literally regives life, forgives, gives itself without reserve body and soul . . . and, at the last minute, it gives and forgives life as for the first time, life for life [*elle donne et pardonne comme pour la première fois la vie, la vie pour la vie*]."⁴⁴ Every reiteration of "*grâce*" regives and every reiteration of "*oui*" reaffirms life for the duration of life, each time entwining uniqueness (in the name of *sauf*) and repetition (in the name of *foi*) in a *tekhne* of donation that continues for the whole of life.

But this whole does not signify a closed totality or a process of totalization, akin to a sealing of "together [*ensemble*]." Whole and "together [*ensemble*]" instead name events, instances in which these donations and redonations happen, each time bringing to pass what Derrida terms a "substitution of the irreplaceable [*remplacement de l'irremplaçable*]" thanks to a successive reavowal of faith (in the performative act Derrida calls "fiding [*fidance*]" each time uniquely.⁴⁵ Such a reaffirming reavowal performs a *revenir*, even before the beginning, that recalls what Derrida idiomatically refers to as an "advent [*avènement*]," namely, a "globalization of avowal [*mondialisation de l'aveu*]" ("Avowing," 32; "Avouer," 202).⁴⁶ Thinkable only in the traumatic wake of the Shoah (and the subsequent invention of "crimes against humanity"), this advent allies with *tekhne* in ways that might

unsettle at once all conditions of living and of “living together [*vivre ensemble*],” with the living and with the dead, with animals, and with techno-biological prostheses that install death at the heart of life, *for* life.

Nevertheless, this “globalization of avowal” does not efface the uniqueness of every avowal and every affirmation, every “*grâce*” and every “*oui*,” as well as every opening, giving, saving, blessing, welcoming that these words perform. Nor does it minimize questions of life and of “living together [*vivre ensemble*],” for these remain open and vital questions whose responses must be invented each time, *as if* for the first time. Furthermore, that this globalization reveals an element of *tekhnē* in every scene of avowal and affirmation does not provide prefabricated, globalized, or globalizable answers to questions such as “how ‘to live together’? [*comment ‘vivre ensemble’?*]” As Derrida attests, “There is no ‘how’ [*il n’y a pas de ‘comment’*] . . . that could take the form of precepts, of rules, of norms, or previous criteria available to knowledge. The ‘how’ must be invented by each at each moment” (“Avowing,” 34; “Avouer,” 206). These questions thus persist *for* the whole of life, coming and coming again, bringing each time a risk and a chance, and demanding inventive response and responsibility each time.

Every avowal and affirmation, every response *for* life, arrives via *for* as an event that critiques and cancels ontology. Ontology here stands as a nickname for what Derrida elsewhere calls metaphysics: a science of presence that attempts to naturalize particular valuations, elisions, and erasures (the most notable for Derrida being the debasement of writing by speech), often in the name of being (*être*). This makes “it is [*c’est*]” ontology’s most concise and powerful self-assertive self-expression—a simple, indicative statement of predication based on presence, on that which *is*. But *for* is older, more primordial and more originary, than anything that *is*; as the prolegomenon that “pronames and prenames everything,” *for* “is” already on the scene long before ontology. *For* comes before the beginning (and even before “before the beginning”), since the beginning marks the beginning of being and all that it entails: ontology, metaphysics, presence, essence—and grammar, especially a grammar that operates by predication in the indicative verbal mood. *For* precedes and exceeds any grammar, for which it remains inexpressible. Therefore, Derrida writes, “It is *as if* one had to invent a new grammar,” *as if* a new grammar were necessary, called *for by for*.⁴⁷ This grammar would have to take place in the subjunctive, the verbal mood of *as if*, of possibility rather than actuality, used to refer to an event not certain to happen or to a nonconcrete reality. The subjunctive remains more abstract than the indicative, expressing conditions of volition, doubt, and necessity as well as matters of judgment and emotion. The subjunctive would thus take place under the sign of “might [*puisse*],” expressing possibility and impossibility, chance and risk.

This newly invented grammar in the subjunctive would be a grammar of life rather than of being, given Derrida’s assertion that “life is mighty might [*la vie est puissance puissante*],” that life and might “are basically the same [*sont au fond le même*],” especially since life might or might not continue—life might or might not encounter death at any

moment, on the side of life.⁴⁸ The impossible might arrive at any time, unexpectedly and unforeseeably. An eventive grammar of life would thus have to locate life beyond ontology, beyond any discourse of “it is [*c’est*],” in a different grammar of “it might” (or “it might not”). Life would become no longer a matter of being (*être*) but of “mighting” (*puissanti*), and what “might” or “might not” would have to be able to arrive in life, as an event, by overcoming the traditional opposition that would no longer hold between *dynamis* and *energeia*.

Under the aegis of *for*, in this vital grammar of the subjunctive, life would arrive before being and, therefore, before the beginning. Like might, life (in Derrida’s words) “in advance eludes the ‘it is [*c’est*].’ Just as a certain performative eludes the constative and a certain subjunctive the indicative.”⁴⁹ In short, life precedes being, eluding being by coming before: before the beginning, like “*grâce, oui, grâce*.” Life precedes and exceeds being, since “up to the end,” Derrida writes, “‘for life’ has no end, it knows no end.”⁵⁰ Derrida continues: “This ‘for life’ is not a *being* for life symmetrically opposed to the famous *Sein zum Tode*, being-toward-death, as its other side. It is on the same side.”⁵¹ Here Derrida reaffirms his insistence that life and death both come on the side of life, which is qualitatively different from any ontological structure of Martin Heidegger’s.

Just as life *for* life does not stand opposed to *Sein zum Tode*, “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” does not stand opposed to *Mitsein*, “being-with” (another Heideggerian variation of *Sein*). On the side of life, *for* life, “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” precedes and exceeds any ontological “being together [*être-ensemble*]” and, with it, Heidegger’s *Mitsein*. “Together [*ensemble*]” would therefore be a matter of living rather than of being. This displacement of ontology by life (of being by “mighting”) significantly disrupts traditional concepts of politics based on “together [*ensemble*],” as Derrida observes: “‘Living together [*vivre ensemble*],’ if it were possible, would mean putting to the test the insufficiency of this old couple of concepts that conditions, in the West, more or less any metaphysics, any interpretation of the social bond, any political philosophy or any sociology of the being-together [*l’être-ensemble*], the old couples *physis/nomos*, *physis/thesis*, nature/convention, biological life/law [*droit*]” (“Avowing,” 27; “Avouer,” 194). Here Derrida maintains life’s priority over being by writing “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” in terms of *as if*, which keeps “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” outside of the domain of being, outside of any regime of metaphysics (particularly figured in terms of nature-culture).

Instead, Derrida names “living together [*vivre ensemble*]” as an “interruptive excess” with respect to this ontometaphysical opposition and with respect to any formed whole: “‘Living together [*vivre ensemble*]’ remains ‘always an excess with regard to the whole [*ensemble*]’” (“Avowing,” 27; “Avouer,” 194–95). This “interruptive excess” shatters any possibility of “together [*ensemble*]” as a noun—as a definite and definable object in an ontological grammar. In this newly invented grammar, “together [*ensemble*]” would function only as an adverb, as in “living together [*vivre ensemble*],” thereby locating what Derrida identifies as its “fracturing openness” only “‘there where it exceeds, dislocates, contests the au-

thority of the noun 'ensemble,' to wit, the closure of an ensemble," for "the authority of the whole [ensemble] will always be the first threat for all 'living together [vivre ensemble]'" ("Avowing," 21; "Avouer," 185).

"Living together [vivre ensemble]" thus remains and must remain open, unclosed, incomplete, and incompleteable, for the whole of life. "Living together [vivre ensemble]" remains always to come, *à-venir*, welcoming with a reavowing, reaffirming "*oui*" any *arrivant* who might come unforeseeably. "*Oui*" would, again and again, revitalize life by reiterating what Derrida terms "the live-ance of life, before and beyond being [*le vivement de la vie, avant et au-delà de l'être*]," in a new grammar invented according to "an original subjunctive"—a grammar of *as if*, of potential and vitality.⁵² This would be a grammar of experience and of experimentation, since Derrida conceives of experience in terms of living rather than of being: experience, according to him, is "living for living [*vivre pour vivre*]." ⁵³ Here experience effects a translational displacement, from life for life to living for living, which revives the noun "life" with the gerund "living," an open, in-finite, vital process that happens and that provides the medium in which the impossible takes place, as in a miracle. But this gerund already effects another displacement in translation, since "living" stands in for *vivre*, the infinitive form of the verb "to live." The infinitive highlights the sense of futurity, as expressed in the infinitive construction *à-venir*, "to come" (which plays homophonically on *l'avenir*, the future). The infinitive stands as an ideal way to name an unanticipatable event, particularly since this verb lacks a subject, so that the infinitive makes way or leaves room for an event to occur. This newly invented grammar in the subjunctive—a grammar of *as if*—would, then, have to make room for the infinitive (or, perhaps, the in-finitive), reiterating the verbal rather than nominal quality of this open-ended, eventive grammar.

This bears on any question or instance of living, particularly the question of "living together [vivre ensemble]," since "living together [vivre ensemble]" renders an infinitive gerundive in translation. But "living together [vivre ensemble]" is, according to Derrida, "in its French idiom . . . in the infinitive and without a determined subject, a verb plus an adverb" ("Avowing," 22–23; "Avouer," 188). "Living together [vivre ensemble]" might be better translated as "to live together [vivre ensemble]," further accenting its unforeseeable, in-finite character that remains open-ended, *as if* it were a question. "To live together [vivre ensemble]" cannot but retain an interrogatory trace, haunted by a spectral "how? [comment?]" that calls for a unique answer each time, thus keeping the infinitive open to whoever or whatever might arrive—remaining open, then, for the whole of life. Furthermore, because "to live [vivre]" remains constitutively open to a possible arrival—no matter how impossible—of an *arrivant*, an event, a future, it is haunted by the specter of "together [ensemble]."

Such a specter carries with it a messianic trace, for the messianic names par excellence the event that remains to come (*à-venir*). The messianic might or might not come, perhaps as an *arrivant* or a *revenant* (or, impossibly, as both); regardless, it names what

Derrida calls "messianic spectrality, or spectral messianicity" and avows "a certain faith older than all religions" ("Avowing," 41; "Avouer," 215).⁵⁴ This would be the faith *as if* in a miracle, the faith that recalls and reavows "*grâce, oui, grâce*" as it affirms every performative possibility, every possibility of performativity. To live (*vivre*) would partake of this faith insofar as to live (*vivre*) would always already mean "to live together [*vivre ensemble*]"—together with the messianic as the quintessential eventful possibility that might arrive unforeseeably any time. In this way, the messianic would name the impossible possibility of any event, of any *arrivant*, of alterity and thus of "living together [*vivre ensemble*]" ; it would name, in Derrida's words, "the opening to the future or to the coming of the other . . . but without horizon of expectation and without prophetic prefiguration. The coming of the other can emerge as a singular event only when no anticipation *sees it coming*, when the other and death—and radical evil—can come as a surprise at any moment. . . . Interrupting or tearing history itself apart, doing it by deciding, in a decision that can consist in letting the other come. . . . The messianic exposes itself to absolute surprise."⁵⁵ In this way, the messianic bears on what Derrida calls "a 'general structure of experience'" —which is to say, of living (*vivre*).⁵⁶ The messianic, as the impossible possibility that might nevertheless happen, would condition and would keep open any possibility of living (*vivre*)—in other words, of "living together [*vivre ensemble*]."

Just as Derrida affirms, "To live' is always 'to live together' [*vivre, c'est toujours vivre ensemble*]," so that "one cannot not 'live together' [*on ne peut pas ne pas 'vivre ensemble'*]," to live is always to *live on* ("Avowing," 19–20, 23, translation slightly modified; "Avouer," 183, 189). One cannot not live on. The infinitive *vivre* contains this eventive potentiality by remaining itself to come, *à-venir*, open to the future and to any *arrivant* or any event that comes, no matter what. From before the beginning, then, the infinitive responds affirmingly to the call to do the impossible. To live (*vivre*) avows before the beginning, thanks to "*grâce, oui, grâce*," to do the impossible insofar as to live (*vivre*) is always already to live on (*survivre*). Because to live (*vivre*) predates and outlives any ontology, any nominal grammar, any condition, this *sur* of *survivre* is inscribed from before the beginning and *for* the whole of life. This *sur*, Derrida insists, "*is not to be added on to living and dying*. It is originary: life is living on, life is survival [*la vie est survie*]," meaning that "this surviving is life beyond life, life more than life [*la survivance, c'est la vie au-delà de la vie, la vie plus que la vie*]."⁵⁷ *Sur* therefore designates an excessive, elemental surplus intrinsic to living (*vivre*), aporetically making the value of life worth more than life—in other words, incalculable. This excess value allows living (*vivre*) to grant "living together [*vivre ensemble*]" and living on (*survivre*) *for* life, for the risk and chance of these two vitalities depend on life's absolute value. As Derrida formulates this aporia, "Life has absolute value only if it is worth *more than life*," and life's absolute value conditions any chance and opens any risk of "living together [*vivre ensemble*]."⁵⁸

Living on (*survivre*) therefore acts as the impossible condition that makes living (*vivre*) possible, to which living (*vivre*) must respond by avowing the unavowable in what

Derrida calls "the performance of its own event of affirmation" that opens "to the impossible possibility of what comes about [*arrive*]" in living (*vivre*) as living on (*survivre*).⁵⁹ This also extends to "living together [*vivre ensemble*]," since living (*vivre*) is, from before the beginning, "living together [*vivre ensemble*]." Furthermore, "living together [*vivre ensemble*]," as "living on together [*survivre ensemble*]," exemplarily names in the infinitive, *as if* in a new grammar, that which remains to come (*à-venir*) and thus revitalizes living by keeping it faithfully open to whoever or whatever might arrive: an event, an other, death, the future, love, messianism, peace, even "*grâce, oui, grâce*." Because any of these might come at any instant, "living on together [*survivre ensemble*]"—from before the beginning, thanks to "*grâce*," and into the unforeseeable—remains, in Derrida's words "a *vital necessity*" ("Avowing," 23, "Avouer," 188). "*Oui*," "living on together [*survivre ensemble*]" would be a necessity *for* life.

William Robert, *To Live, by Grace*

1. Jacques Derrida, “Avouer—l'impossible: ‘retours,’ repentir et réconciliation,” in *Comment vivre ensemble? Actes du XXXVIIe Colloque des intellectuels juifs de langue française*, ed. Jean Halperin and Nelly Hansson (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001), 181; “Avowing—The Impossible: ‘Returns,’ Repentance, and Reconciliation,” trans. Gil Anidjar, this volume. It is important to note that Derrida’s opening words, “grâce” and “oui,” remain untranslated.
2. Jacques Derrida, “Nombre de oui,” in *Psyché: Invention de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 639, 644; “A Number of Yes,” trans. Brian Holmes, *Qui Parle* 2, no. 2 (1988): 120, 126.
3. Jacques Derrida, *Ulysse gramophone: Deux mots pour Joyce* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 126; “Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce,” trans. Tina Kendall and Shari Benstock, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 298.
4. Derrida, “A Number of Yes,” 129; “Nombre de oui,” 648.
5. Jacques Derrida, “Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement,” in *Dire l'événement, est-ce possible?* (Montreal: L'Harmattan, 2001), 81; “A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,” trans. Gila Walker, *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (2007): 441. Jacques Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie, c'est à dire . . .* (Paris: Galilée, 2002), 19; *H.C. for Life, That Is to Say . . .*, trans. Laurent Mileti and Stefan Herbrechter (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 14.
6. Derrida, “Ulysses Gramophone,” 301, 299; *Ulysse gramophone*, 130, 128. That “oui” is not first but second, though it remains preontological and takes place before the beginning, resonates with the opening of Genesis, in which creation begins not with the first but with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet: not א but ב. This ב begins בְּרֵאשִׁית (*bereshit*), the word that begins creation. At least one recent translation of the Hebrew Bible (by the Jewish Publication Society) translates its opening words not as “in the beginning God created” but “when God began to create,” which suggests a time before “time,” in which an arche-originary “oui” would position itself, as before the beginning, thereby according it a preontological kinship with א. In a different register, “oui” also bears a kinship with the Platonic figure of *khōra* (χώρα), which becomes an important element in Derrida’s thought, particularly in his reflections on religion. On this latter point, see Derrida, *Khōra* (Paris: Galilée, 1993); “*Khōra*,” trans. Ian Macleod, in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 87–127.
7. Derrida, “Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,” 455; “Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement,” 102.
8. Derrida, “Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,” 456; “Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement,” 103. See also Derrida’s extended meditation on forgiveness in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Michael Hughes (New York: Routledge, 2001), 25–60, esp. 32–33.
9. Jacques Derrida, “Comme si c’était possible, ‘within such limits’ . . .,” in *Papier Machine* (Paris: Galilée, 2001), 285; “As If It Were Possible, ‘Within Such Limits’ . . .,” trans. Benjamin Elwood and Elizabeth Rottenberg, in *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971–2001*, ed. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 344. Derrida goes on to elaborate: “One forgives only the unforgivable [on ne pardonne que l’impardonnable]. By forgiving what is already forgivable, one forgives nothing. Consequently, forgiveness is only possible, as such, where, faced with the unforgivable, it seems thus impossible,” so that “the ‘condition of possibility’ is a ‘condition of impossibility.’” See Derrida, “As If It Were Possible,” 349; “Comme si c’était possible,” 291–92.
10. In “Avowing” see also 30 and 37; “Avouer,” 199 and 210. Here, *s’il y en a* points toward a metonymic kinship that bonds itself, *peut-être*, and the subjunctive as figures of *as if*, which plays

important roles throughout Derrida's corpus. I thank Francis Sanzaro, Nell Champoux, and Wilson Dickinson for reading and discussing with me in French a number of Derrida's texts—discussions out of which this point emerges.

11. Jacques Derrida, *Donner le temps: 1. La fausse monnaie* (Paris: Galilée, 1991), 19; *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 7. Derrida, "Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Impossible," 449; "Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement," 94. Derrida extends this exorbitantly excessive character of the event, arriving under the sign of *as if*, in writing that "the event as such, if there is any [*s'il y en a*], couldn't care less [*se moque*] about the performative or the constative." See Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* (Paris: Galilée, 2000), 94; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 79. See also Derrida's remarks on the symptom vis-à-vis the event (and the infinitive) in "Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event," 456–58; "Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement," 104–7.

12. Derrida offers a compelling reading of the Akedah, written in response to Søren Kierkegaard's own compelling reading in *Fear and Trembling*, in *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), esp. 53–81. For a very different but provocative take on Abraham in the Akedah, see Franz Kafka's "Abraham," in *The Basic Kafka* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1971), 172–74. For an excellent commentary on the Abraham more broadly, see Gil Anidjar's "Once More, Once More": Derrida, the Arab, the Jew," in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1–39.

13. Derrida, *H.C. pour la vie*, 90; *H.C. for Life*, 80. Derrida offers a provocative meditation on religion, and negative theology in particular, under the name *sauf*. See Jacques Derrida, *Sauf le nom* (Paris: Galilée, 1993); "Sauf le nom," trans. John P. Leavey Jr., in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 35–85.

14. Jacques Derrida, "Foi et savoir: Les deux sources de la 'religion' aux limites de la simple raison," in *La religion*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 83; "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," trans. Samuel Weber, in *Religion*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 63. Derrida considers religious themes of name, promise, and testimony in a different vein in "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," trans. Ken Frieden, in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 73–142.

15. Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," 63–64; "Foi et savoir," 83–84.

16. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 4; *H.C. pour la vie*, 11.

17. Jacques Derrida, *De l'hospitalité* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1997), 73; *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 77, translation modified.

18. Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 25, translation modified; *De l'hospitalité*, 29.

19. Jacques Derrida, "Hostipitality," trans. Gil Anidjar, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 361, 362. For a commentary on these points, particularly vis-à-vis Abraham, see Gil Anidjar, "Hosting," in *Derrida and Religion*, ed. Yvonne Sherwood and Kevin Hart (New York: Routledge, 2005), 63–71. For other helpful treatments of hospitality, see Hent de Vries, "Hospitable Thought," in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tom Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 172–92, and Michael Naas, *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 154–69.

20. Jacques Derrida, *Donner la mort* (Paris: Galilée, 1999), 110; *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 78.
21. Derrida, "Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event," 449; "Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement," 94.
22. See also "Avowing—The Impossible," 18; "Avouer," 182.
23. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 53; *H.C. pour la vie*, 50.
24. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 61; *H.C. pour la vie*, 57.
25. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 60; *H.C. pour la vie*, 56.
26. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 61; *H.C. pour la vie*, 57.
27. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 87; *H.C. pour la vie*, 78.
28. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 87, translation modified; *H.C. pour la vie*, 78. *Pro*, too, has a genealogy, which connects it to the Greek *πρό*.
29. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 88; *H.C. pour la vie*, 78.
30. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 87, and see 12; *H.C. pour la vie*, 78, and see 17-18. See also "Avowing," 26-27; "Avouer," 193-95.
31. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 39, 113; *H.C. pour la vie*, 39, 98. See also pages 29, 47 and 31, 46, respectively, where Derrida discusses "side (côté)."
32. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 52; *H.C. pour la vie*, 50.
33. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 48; *H.C. pour la vie*, 46.
34. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 48; *H.C. pour la vie*, 46.
35. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 81; *H.C. pour la vie*, 73.
36. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 134; *H.C. pour la vie*, 116. (This might also be translated as "a promise from life to life to death, whether it will be life or death.") Derrida discusses this point in *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 46. Derrida also repeats his formulation "tout autre est tout autre" in this text.
37. Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," 47; "Foi et savoir," 63.
38. Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," 28; "Foi et savoir," 41.
39. Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," 47, translation modified, and see 41-42; "Foi et savoir," 63, and see 56-57. See also *H.C. for Life*, 120; *H.C. pour la vie*, 104.
40. Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," 51; "Foi et savoir," 69.
41. For a different but resonant consideration of *tekhné* and life, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 93-95. With this in mind, this "living together [*vivre ensemble*]" can suggest a new mode of biopolitics.
42. The nature-culture distinction occupies a place at the heart of Derrida's work since its very beginning, with Derrida having devoted two of his earliest texts, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" and *Of Grammatology*, to careful and inventive critiques of it. These critiques relate to his discussions of structuralism and poststructuralism, modernity, mourning, psychoanalysis, genealogy, sexual difference, technology, and politics—all vital issues that recur throughout Derrida's corpus. I explore some of these issues, in different contexts, in "Witnessing the Archive: In Mourning," in *Religion, Violence, Memory, and Place*, ed. Oren Baruch Stier and J. Shawn Landres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 37-50; "Antigone's Nature," *Hypatia* 25, no. 2 (2010): 412-36; and *Trials: Of Antigone and Jesus* (New York: Fordham University

Press, 2010), esp. 20–35. For some of the many excellent considerations of these topics, see Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), esp. 40–60; Geoffrey Bennington, “Derridabase,” in *Jacques Derrida*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), esp. 1–23; Peggy Kamuf, *Book of Adresses* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005); Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); Hent de Vries, *Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Elisabeth Weber, “Elijah’s Futures,” in *Futures: Of Jacques Derrida*, ed. Richard Rand (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 201–18; David Wills, *Prosthesis* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), esp. 130–75; and the essays in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tom Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

43. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 53; *H.C. pour la vie*, 50.

44. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 127, translation modified; *H.C. pour la vie*, 110.

45. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 95; *H.C. pour la vie*, 84. See also “Avowing,” 40; “Avouer,” 215, where Derrida mentions “a certain faith older than all religions.”

46. See also “Faith and Knowledge,” which offers lengthy considerations of globalization, globalatinization, and the religious (especially Abrahamic) imports of such *tekhinē* for possibilities of living and “living together [vivre ensemble].”

47. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 70; *H.C. pour la vie*, 64.

48. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 69; *H.C. pour la vie*, 63.

49. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 10, and see 19, 23; *H.C. pour la vie*, 16, and see 23, 34. For an approach to these questions of life from a different angle, see Leonard Lawlor, *The Implications of Immanence: Toward a New Concept of Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

50. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 88; *H.C. pour la vie*, 78.

51. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 88; *H.C. pour la vie*, 78.

52. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 84, and see 61; *H.C. pour la vie*, 76, and see 57. Derrida goes on to insist that “one should henceforth . . . use the word *vivement* as a verbal noun rather than as an adverb: one would say *le vivant* [the live-ance], *le vivant du vivant* [the life-pool of the live-ance].” See Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 150; *H.C. pour la vie*, 128.

53. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 89, translation modified; *H.C. pour la vie*, 79. Though I cannot explore this in detail here, the themes of experimentation, test, and trial run through *H.C. for Life*, *That Is to Say . . .* and bear specifically on questions of experience and undecidability, especially vis-à-vis life and death. For a provocative consideration of these themes, see Avital Ronell, *The Test Drive* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005). For a complementary discussion of experience, see Derrida’s interview with Jean-Luc Nancy, “Eating Well,” or the Calculation of the Subject,” trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell, in *Points . . . : Interviews 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 255–87.

54. See also Derrida, “Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,” 461; “*Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l’événement*,” 111–12, where Derrida suggests that “maybe religion starts here,” namely, with the messianic as an event that might (or might not) take place and the attendant “act of faith having already commenced.”

55. Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge,” 17, and see 47; “*Foi et savoir*,” 27–28, and see 63.

56. Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," 18; "Foi et savoir," 28.
57. Jacques Derrida, *Apprendre à vivre enfin: Entretien avec Jean Birnbaum* (Paris: Galilée, 2005), 26, 54-55; *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Hoboken, N.J.: Melville, 2007), 26, 52. Elsewhere, *sur-vie* is translated as "more-than-life."
58. Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," 50; "Foi et savoir," 68.
59. Jacques Derrida, "Survivre," in *Parages* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), 149; "Living On: Border Lines," trans. James Hulbert, in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom, Paul De Man, Jacques Derrida, Geoffrey H. Hartman, and J. Hillis Miller (New York: Seabury/Continuum, 1979), 103-4.

Kevin Hart, *Four or Five Words in Derrida*

1. Also see Catherine Malabou and Jacques Derrida, *Counterpath: Traveling with Jacques Derrida*, trans. David Wills (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 15.
2. Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 26. Here Derrida places quotation marks around "older," which he forgets to do in the later, similar remark.
3. See Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," in *Religion*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 64. Also see Derrida's comments on "belief" in *H.C. for Life, That Is to Say . . .*, trans. Laurent Milesi and Stefan Herbrechter (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 3.
4. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. and intro. David B. Allison, preface by Newton Garver (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 6. Citations in the immediately subsequent paragraphs are given within parentheses in the text.
5. See Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 259.
6. Derrida, *H.C. for Life*, 158.
7. Jacques Derrida, *Apprendre à vivre enfin: Entretien avec Jean Birnbaum* (Paris: Galilée, 2005), 54.
8. I call *la différence*, *le supplément*, and all the rest "nicknames" since Derrida is clear that they cannot be proper names: There is nothing "proper" about them.
9. Also see in this connection Derrida's reflections on the idiom "apprendre à vivre enfin" in *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, introduction by Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (Routledge: New York, 1994), xvii-xx; and generally, *Apprendre à vivre enfin*.
10. Derrida, "The Deaths of Roland Barthes," in *The Work of Mourning*, ed. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 41.
11. For Levinas's use of the expression, see *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 80.
12. For the dating of Derrida's renewed interest in Blanchot, see *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, ed. Christie V. McDonald, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), 78.